

In November 1997, the Washington State Transportation Commission approved funding for design work and public involvement efforts for replacement of the east half of the State Route 104 Hood Canal Bridge. This newsletter provides an update of current design activities and future plans for this project.

## More Than Just A Replacement Project

Our project name has changed to reflect that there is a lot more happening on the bridge during construction than just replacing the east half. One of the improvements being made as part of the "retrofit" portion of the project is widening the bridge shoulders from three feet to eight, to provide safer passage for bicyclists and pedestrians. The extra width will also provide an area outside of the travel lanes for emergency stopping (such as breakdowns) and maintenance activities. Design engineers are developing plans to continue the eight-foot shoulders onto the old west-half as well. Examples of other work that will be accomplished during this project include:

- Replacing the bridge approaches at each end with a wider, more durable, roadway surface;
- Replacing the east and west trusses that attach the floating portion of the bridge to the land-side approaches. These new trusses will be easier to maintain and will be designed to withstand stronger earthquakes movement;
- Building 13 new pontoons that will serve as the foundation for the new east-half roadway;
- Reconditioning three "old" pontoons that the State saved from construction in the early 1980's (these are currently anchored in Port Gamble Bay);
- Building a new east-half draw span with updated electrical and mechanical systems;

## Bridge Construction Plans

Construction plans for the east-half of the Hood Canal bridge were drafted in the early 1980s by Parsons Brinkerhoff, an engineering firm with expertise in special structures. These plans are currently being upgraded to current design standards, and will include a widened roadway deck to accommodate the new eight-foot wide shoulders. The plans are scheduled to be completed in the spring of 2001.

## Closure Mitigation Plans

After nearly 10 months of working with agencies in Clallam, Jefferson and Kitsap counties, and soliciting comments from citizens who attended four open houses, the first phase of a Closure Mitigation Plan was completed in December 1999. The plan contains a list of options that were developed to address travel demand during the 6- to 8-weeks the bridge will be out of service while the east-half is being replaced. These options were presented to an oversight committee of elected officials in the three-county area for approval. Of the 62 options first explored, 11 "preferred" options have been identified for further study.

The second phase of the Closure Mitigation Plan will explore each of the 11 options in enough detail to fully understand the monetary and social costs associated with each individual option. This work includes drafting preliminary plans, working with state and federal agencies to determine impacts, and developing a cost estimate that accounts for all planning, engineering, and construction/implementation costs.

All work to further develop these options was suspended in December

Transportation Budget from the Legislature. The budget was signed on May 2, 2000. Project staff will develop a workplan within the next few months and begin the detail work on the preferred options in late fall 2000 to complete the second phase of the Mitigation Plan.

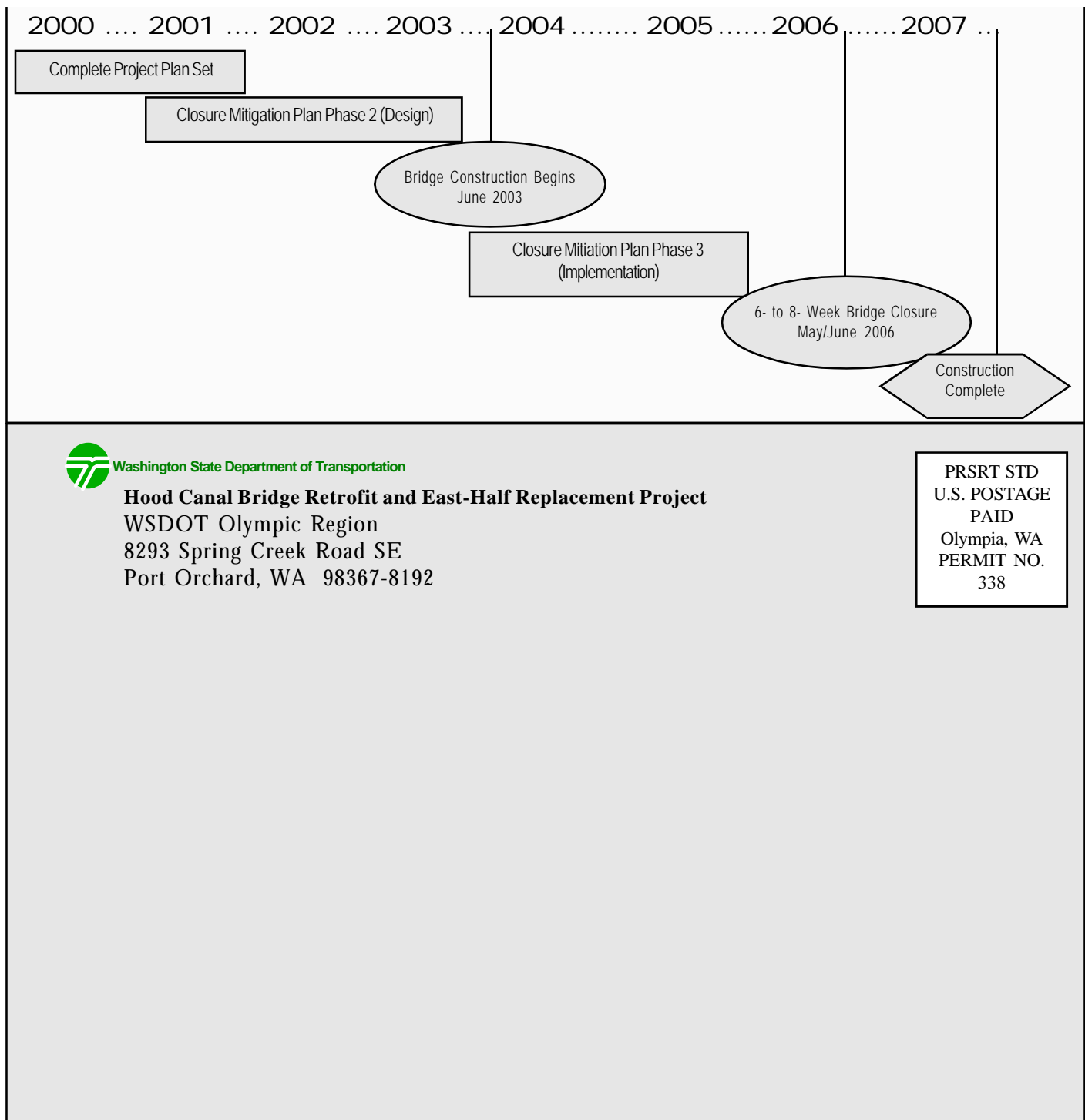
## Additional Closures Needed

Originally, it was planned for all work that would significantly affect traffic to occur during the 6- to 8- week total closure (May/June 2006). It is now clear, however, that two, week-end full-closures will be needed in early 2006 to construct the bridges approaches. These closures are not weather dependent and therefore will take place during the off-season. This will ensure that the floating portion can be completed within the 6- to 8-week time frame. The widening work on the west half will be done over two construction seasons (2005-2006) and requires periodic nighttime closures of limited duration.

## Environmental Work

As one can imagine, much of our engineering work is focused on minimizing impacts to the environment. This work includes identifying and mitigating impacts to the marine ecosystem, air quality, noise and stormwater runoff. Our goal is to have all necessary permits and environmental assessments completed by July 2001—this will allow State engineers and private contractors to begin work on the bridge as soon as project funds are allocated.

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## The Closure Mitigation Plan: Why Consider A No Action Scenario?

An essential element in determining how best to spend scarce public funds is evaluating what would happen if we didn't do anything to address a given need. The first step in the Closure Mitigation planning process was considering the No Action option—that is, asking the question, “Would it be acceptable to the public if we were to do nothing to accommodate their travel needs between the Olympic Peninsula and the Kitsap Peninsula during the 6- to 8-week bridge closure?” Known as the *No Action Scenario*, this question was considered along with background research information to make an informed decision on the purpose and need of the Closure Mitigation Plan.

The following information was considered by the project committees before making a determination on the acceptability of the No Action Scenario:

- The bridge will be closed for 6- to 8-weeks in late-spring/early-summer to float-in the new east-half.
- 14,900 trips cross the Hood Canal Bridge are made during the average work day.
- 5,000 trips a day cross the bridge to go to and from work.
- If nothing were done to accommodate the traffic during the bridge closure, traffic would have to detour to US 101 and other state facilities—a detour of 90 miles to travel from the west side of the bridge to Tacoma.
- 1,500 trips a day cross the Hood Canal Bridge to travel to and from medical appointments.
- Over 1,000 trips are made across the bridge to carry freight and goods to and from the Olympic Peninsula.